NEW LEADER: Dreams of a larger center

FROM PAGE 1

Now, she wants to hire more staff. Devocelle is the only full-time worker; others work part time or volunteer.

She favors more advocacy activities. But she will continue to work with the center's 20-plus groups, and coordinate local events such as PrideFest on July 17.

At PrideFest, she plans to stage another mock gay wedding ceremony, and couples will again apply for a marriage license through the El Paso County Clerk and Recorder's Office.

She has a vision that the center one day will be visible to everyone in the community.

CAROL LAWRENCE, THE GAZETTE

Linda Devocelle is the new director of the Pikes Peak Gay and Lesbian Community Center, which works to achieve acceptance for gays.

The 400-square-foot center now sits in an alley behind 716 N. Tejon St., and people sometimes have a difficult time finding it.

Devocelle wants a larger facility with a tall flag pole in front of the office.

She knows that won't happen any time soon. With its $200,000 budget, the center uses most of its resources for advocacy programs and local events.

Devocelle regularly works with Citizens Project, a local activist group that takes on issues such as equal rights, individual freedoms, the separation of church and state and civic engagement.

Citizens Project and the center have worked toward returning benefits to same-sex partners of city employees and encouraging businesses not to discriminate against employees because of their sexual orientation.

"Her new role will bring a fresh perspective to the needs of the community," Executive Director Ellie Collinson said. "Her strengths will likely be an increased awareness in the community."

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er's license, proof of insurance and vehicle registration before you get them. If the documents are out of reach, tell the officer where they are before you reach for them.

- If the officer asks you to step out of the vehicle, don't make sudden or threatening movements.
- Don't argue — the officer will just advise you to tell it to the judge. A few drivers curse at officers, and that's a big no-no.

"Then the officer's not going to give you any break at all," Tobias said. "He's going to give you a ticket for each violation that he observed."

Drivers who get pulled over should take a few steps for their own safety, too.

If you're unsure whether the person pulling you over is a police officer, don't open doors or windows before asking to see a badge and

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PHOT

The Continental Army retreats Friday as the British army pursues it, above, during a re-enactment of the Battle of Monmouth, south of Broadmoor Elementary School. More than 300 fifth-graders from six schools in Cheyenne Mountain School District 12 took part in the 10th annual event. Flames shoot out of a cannon, top right, as it's fired the Revolutionary War battle. was fought June 28, 1778. Alth Monmouth County, N.J., was a fered fewer deaths than the B and public support for the wa

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By **ANSLEE WILLETT**
THE GAZETTE

"GT" 5/14/05

More advocacy, staff are goals

Gay center names director

By LISA MARTÍNEZ
THE GAZETTE

Linda Devocelle was a late bloomer.

She attended a Catholic school, served in a convent and married a man from seminary.

At age 37, after 13 years of marriage and four children, she says, she realized that she was gay.

Now 60 and divorced, Devocelle is fighting for the rights of gays and lesbians in the public arena.

Devocelle recently was appointed director of the Pikes Peak Gay and Lesbian Community Center, one of the largest groups in Colorado Springs working for equal rights for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people.

She stepped into the position as gay rights issues once again took center stage in Colorado Springs on a national level.

Westboro Baptist Church members marched through town in March to protest a gay student organization at Palmer High School, and the national Soulforce group visited the city this month to protest Focus on the Family.

Devocelle and her comrades were there, holding hands with their gay partners and waving pro-tolerance banners.

"Gay rights is out of the closet," Devocelle said. "People might not be, but the issue is everywhere. It's not going back in the closet."

Devocelle replaced Ryan Acker, who stepped down to continue his education.

Devocelle began volunteering at the center in 2000, when she moved to Colorado Springs after several governmental stints in other cities.

She took on a part-time position as the center's resources manager, which soon turned into full-time work.

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